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Soviets increasing their grip on press in Greece

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ATHENS, Greece — The first locally produced issue of the Soviet propaganda organ *New Times* rolled off Greek presses yesterday, causing Western concern about the growth of Soviet disinformation in this strategic NATO country.

Diplomatic sources said that fully 65 percent of the Greek daily newspaper circulation is either paid or influenced by Soviet agents.

According to journalist Paul Anastasi, who has played a significant role in exposing Moscow's role here, "Greece is the main target of Soviet disinformation in Western Europe. Here anti-Americanism is cultivated by the press."

Mr. Anastasi said that while Soviet influence is growing within the ruling Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK), the "Greek-American lobby, the most powerful foreign policy instrument, was being weakened."

With the publication of *New Times*, Greece became the 130th country to print or distribute the organ supervised by the KGB disinformation apparatus. Greece is considered a vital link in the defense of NATO's southeastern flank and is the home of four major U.S. bases.

Other publications identified with So-

viet propaganda have been active here for some time. Foremost among them is the tabloid *Ethnos*, which is deadlocked in a libel battle with London's respected *Economist* magazine over accusations of Soviet links.

The *Economist* was unable to prove that *Ethnos* was launched with a Soviet grant of \$1.8 million. But it insisted in court that the Greek daily "is the mouthpiece of a communist and totalitarian state's machine."

Although the London jury did not reach a decision, the trial turned out to be the strongest legal presentation of the Soviet Union's manipulation of the press.

Other Greek publications that follow the Moscow line are *Proti*, *Vima* and the satirical weekly *Pondiki*. Also available here is the Nicaraguan publication *Soberania*, from which some leftist papers take material prepared by the KGB.

The degree of artificially fueled anti-Americanism is such that the U.S. Em-

bassy in Athens, in a reversal of policy, recently began to issue formal denials of various printed allegations. One such denial concerned the claim by Eleftheros Logos that during the recent Greco-Turkish crisis in the Aegean Sea the U.S. communications base at Nea Makri jammed Greek radar and interfered in Greek warships' radio traffic.

Disinformation in Greece is under overall supervision of Soviet Ambassador Viktor Stukhalin, intelligence sources say. An estimated 30 KGB and GRU (military intelligence) agents are assigned to the embassy's Commercial Section. Their primary tasks are technological espionage and press contacts.

Soviet-hired agents are reportedly active in the Greek armed forces. Last year three such agents reported by a GRU defector were arrested. Two have already been acquitted, reportedly following intervention by socialist Prime Minister Andreas Papandreu.

During the London libel case, lawyers for *Ethnos* claimed that the daily was not manipulated by Moscow but that its pro-Soviet line reflected the attitude of its readership. It also claimed full commitment to Mr. Papandreu's government.

Started in 1981 by wealthy rightist-turned-socialist George Bobolas, *Ethnos* at one stage reached the circulation of 202,000 — roughly one-fourth of the press run of Greek dailies. *Ethnos* recently lost some of its readership when the Communist Party launched the daily *Proti*.

According to political analysts here, the Soviet Union feels that Greece is particularly prone to its propaganda offensive. The reasons are constant feuding

between Greece and its Western allies and partners, conflict with Turkey and the stain of U.S. support for the "junta of colonels" that ruled the country between 1967 and 1974.

The continuing Turkish military presence on the east Mediterranean island of Cyprus, which many Greeks consider as part of the Hellenic world, is also being exploited by the Soviets.

Ethnos is printed on the most modern presses in Greece. Examples of its recent "news" stories are reports that the United States is turning Cyprus into a nuclear shelter, that the CIA is breeding giant mosquitos to poison its enemies, that the CIA invented AIDS to contaminate the Third World and that the Berlin Wall was built to prevent infiltration of Western agents into East Germany.

Informed sources said that in recent months *Ethnos* printed 14 articles submitted to it by the Soviet Embassy.

The staff of *Ethnos* includes a number of non-Greek correspondents known to Western intelligence services for their communist links.

It was *Ethnos* that announced the publication of the Greek version of *New Times*, hailing it as a source of information on "revolutionary days in the Soviet Union on the threshold of the 21st century."